

## RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND FOLLOW-UP

The Mission made a lengthy and detailed list of recommendations, lessons learned and follow-up actions which are given in sections IV, V and VI of this Report. The major points are highlighted below.

### Recommendations

#### Leading principles for humanitarian aid

a) The rationale for general distribution of food aid in complex emergencies should be primarily humanitarian, i.e. the overriding moral imperative to attempt to save lives which are at risk from starvation. It should not exclude others, but the humanitarian rationale should be paramount. In the first instance, general distribution is the only effective way to get food to stricken populations in large enough quantities, along with supplementary or therapeutic feeding for already starving individuals. At the start of an emergency, the data necessary for targeting distributions to particular needy groups are just not available, and so food must be given to all. Targeting in the form of selective general distribution, i.e. general distribution only to those groups identified as nutritionally at risk, or in vulnerable socioeconomic categories, can be pursued if and when adequate data are available to make the necessary judgements to back up the process of selection. In the absence of detailed data, the risk is that WFP may fail to fulfill its mandate of serving the hungry poor. If data are not available, a reduced general distribution to the entire beneficiary population, as done in this region from 1992 to 1995, may be the only viable middle way between dependency and starvation.

b) The linkage of relief with longer-term development or rehabilitation objectives should be sought through "productive relief". This is the principle that wherever possible, food aid should be directed to productive uses to maximise opportunity and reduce dependency. Methods of implementation may include: targeted distributions, as part of an integrated approach to help promote self-sufficiency among beneficiaries and avoid dependency; food for school and food-for-work activities to facilitate and encourage the rebuilding of social and economic infrastructures; and direct participation of beneficiaries in relief programmes wherever possible to promote more effective implementation of relief aid, and local institution and skill building. Productive relief will only be possible where local motivation and capacity exists independently.

#### Phasing in and phasing out of general distribution

a) Two different options to end general distribution, when relief needs are no longer of the same nature as at the full emergency stage, were considered by the Mission. One option is to continue with general distribution for all up to a predetermined cut-off point, with due advance public notice being given of this intention. The final such general distribution may in some circumstances be made with reduced food baskets and rations, and with or without, as it were, a "golden handshake" in the form perhaps of an additional ration (thus making the last general distribution in fact a double one). The second option is general distribution being continued not for all, but only for those segments of the population deemed to be still in need of it. This could be called "selective" general distribution. The former option is relatively the simpler to undertake while continuing to meet humanitarian objectives. It  
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requires humanitarian monitoring, assessment and decision-making. The latter is to be advised only where there are sufficient socio-economic data to make it a feasible option. "Feasible" in that context means what is administratively possible as well as objective-achieving. It requires socio-economic-nutritional monitoring, assessment and decision making.

b) The way of ending general distribution should be decided from the moment general distribution is started and implemented as part of an integrated strategy to promote self-sufficiency, and made known to all concerned. Beneficiaries should be involved in the process. It should not be left unplanned, just to happen later, because it would then risk being strongly influenced or actually decided by "donor fatigue", "policy vacuum", etc. The choice of method to be used must depend on the type of monitoring and assessment data and on complementary aid. The availability of this information is indispensable. Of course, provisional dates for ending/phasing out will have to be reviewed according to the obtaining situation.

#### Delivery and distribution

a) The present delivery system should be maintained, but with improvements that would allow a comprehensive commodity tracking and reporting system to provide accurate and timely information for WFP's own management purposes and donor reporting. The Mission understands that the Programme is taking such steps, and recommends that this should be given priority.

b) With regard to institutions and final distribution, it is recommended that WFP's logistics and operational responsibilities be expanded to include -besides delivery up to the final delivery point- distribution from this point, also for refugee populations. However, the arrangement would not vary (for example as between NGOs, and refugees' or displaced persons' own organizations) to suit the local context and conditions.

#### Regionalization

a) The "regional approach" should be strengthened following an analysis of division of responsibilities and tasks between WFP headquarters and the country office in Cote d'Ivoire. The aim should be to maximize the potential of the regional office and its interrelations with WFP country offices and other organizations.

#### Information, assessment and monitoring

a) Present procedures regarding logistics and operations systems should be strengthened, especially with regard to data on operations required for internal and other accountability. Data should be reconciled at the end of each PRO phase, preferably through an internal audit.

b) For socio-economic-nutritional assessment and monitoring, a major change is required, i.e., the creation of a new kind of recurring short-term WFP staff position. To begin with, on a trial basis, a specialist should be attached to the regional WFP office in Abidjan for six months with the single purpose of trying to develop and test a methodology for this kind of assessment and monitoring, appropriate to the varied, insecure and changeable situation.

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#### Policy instruments

- a) With regard to policy dialogue, advocacy, coordination and communication, there should be focal points or lead agencies at every point in the process and chain. Where cross-mandates (such as between WFP and UNHCR), etc. continue to elude an effective grasp, lead roles should be played by agencies concerned with the issue. The purpose should be to minimize conflicts, whether these be about mandates, resources or capacities.
- b) Programme policy evaluation should be a regularly scheduled activity, undertaken by evaluation teams that are versed specifically in programme policy evaluation, not operations evaluations. Normally these should be mixed in composition and include internal as well as external evaluators with emergency-specific competence. Donor participation in such evaluations is to be encouraged in ways that fit the circumstances of the particular case.
- c) Ways and means must be found to improve the resources and capacity of the joint WFP/UNHCR/donor/NGO food needs assessments, appropriate to their present scope and nature as joint assessments of operations.

#### Lessons learned

- a) To find a solution to a problem, it must first be identified and then monitored. For humanitarian emergency, the problem is what has become known as "complex emergency's", not least because it is likely to be a changing series of problems, not just a singularity, and moreover not exactly the same for all the actors and parties concerned. What is therefore meant by "complex emergency" has first to be understood, in terms which permit intervention and aid to become part of its solution.
- b) The major achievement of reaching the populations at risk in complex emergencies can be neither fully appreciated nor conclusively defended in the absence of satisfactory logistics and management data.
- c) Programme policy should be policy-driven, not resource-driven (even though resources may always be a constraint), through periodic evaluations by mixed teams of internal and external evaluators.
- d) Within a regional approach, one needs to be fully aware of the sometimes counter-productive tendency to encourage an oversimplified standardization of food baskets and rations.
- e) Without specialized assessment and monitoring of the socio-economic circumstances of the afflicted populations, and their nutrition, there is a risk that WFP will not know enough about their situations to render targeting effective and meaningful.
- t) In order for effective distribution systems to be strengthened, the responsibility for distributing WFP relief food should not simply be handed over to bodies whose credentials and promise fall far below the organization which is responsible for the process up to that part. (see recommendation b) - Delivery and distribution).

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#### Follow-up

It is recommended that the following actions be implemented as early as possible:

- a) A follow-up workshop be held in Abidjan. Its purpose would be to qualify the mission's

findings; to consider the programme policy principles in its recommendations for their significance for operations; and to propose a work plan for follow-up in this region. Another workshop should be held at WFP headquarters with the aim of exploring general themes in complex emergency programme policy evaluation, with particular emphasis on methodology.

b) A post of socio-economic-nutritional assessment and monitoring officer be established (see recommendation b) -Information, assessment and monitoring) to ensure that WFP assistance can be better and more efficiently allocated to those in need.

c) In addition, consideration needs to be given to further strengthening (and resourcing) the Abidjan office by way of regional procurement, finance, logistics emergency and reports officer.

The Mission's recommendations and follow-up actions are currently being considered by the Executive Director.